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# Achilles tendon of local fiscal governance: city councils and participatory budgeting with chances and uneasinesses for Türkiye

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## ABSTRACT



Since its early implementations, the issue of participation has been disputed within the contexts of representative and direct democracy. Participatory budgeting, which is undertaken to internalize civil society and democracy at the local level but is unclear to what extent it is addressed and why it is prescribed, as well as having a scale problem for its participants, packs a punch in terms of contributing to the fiscal dilemmas of city councils. Drawing on global experiences, this study argues that the local fiscal sphere constitutes a critical vulnerability for city councils, as budgeting processes often shift away from genuine individual, citizen, and civil society engagement and evolve instead into politically driven participation dominated by political actors. This manuscript offers a general observation of participatory budgeting and examines the feasibility, advantages, disadvantages, fiscal chances, and uneasinesses of participatory budgeting in the Turkish example as a unitary and decentralized state. The argument that comes out is that technological and democratic evolutions would not necessarily increase participation in favour of low-income and disadvantaged groups, namely due to political conflicts and economic inequalities.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## Introduction

Participation is the process of actively involving, sharing, and contributing to a group, organization, or event. Fundamentally based on the principles of willingness, equality, and cooperation, this concept depicts a process where responsibility is assumed to achieve a common goal. In an environment where the views of all individuals involved are considered both individually and collectively, and decisions are made with enthusiasm, collaboration harnesses different skills, experiences, and perspectives. This leads to clearer and more comprehensible collective outcomes, particularly when the notion of superiority among peers and stakeholders is absent. In a communicative participation process, the awareness that every participant has a specific role and duty, and that supporting other participants in fulfilling these roles is essential, enhances the consistency and applicability of the concept. This

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understanding has also contributed to the evolution of the concept over time and diversified the forms of participatory practices.<sup>1</sup>

The connection between participation and participatory budgeting is one of the most prominent tangible examples of this diversification. Essentially, this connection lies in the fact that participatory budgeting aims to increase citizens' involvement in the budget process. By allowing community members to have a direct say in how public funds are spent and allowing them to influence local government policies and priorities, participatory budgeting seeks to involve citizens in the budgeting process, enhance transparency and accountability, empower communities, and prioritize local needs and preferences. Discussing participatory budgeting today, as reflected in numerous studies, continues to attract the attention of actors across the political spectrum, including central administrations, local governments, unitary and federal institutions, city councils, civil society organizations, political parties, and citizens. The literature on participatory budgeting progresses in stages: first focusing on successful cases, then developing a comparative framework to examine whether similar results are achieved and how this varies by context.<sup>2</sup> A subsequent series of studies, challenging or criticizing the previous positive literature on participatory budgeting, points to its limited impact on the dynamics of municipalities other than the successful case of Porto Alegre in Brazil. It is generally noted that the involvement of participants in the decision-making process through sharply delineated city councils or public assemblies formed on the periphery of urban governance is far from creating a local power centre.<sup>3</sup>

This article seeks to answer the question of whether participatory budgeting, which is circulating globally, poses a fiscal threat to a unitary state. We argue that participatory budgeting, while normatively promising, may generate fiscal vulnerabilities in highly centralized unitary systems such as Türkiye by weakening budgetary discipline, politicizing resource allocation, and challenging the transparency and accountability mechanisms of public finance. The study addresses the fiscal issues that participatory budgeting might cause in a country, drawing inspiration from Achilles' depiction of being able to die from a single wound to his heel or from Day's<sup>4</sup> characterization of participation as a delicate issue that could undermine the functionality of governance, hence referring to it as a fiscal Achilles' tendon.

Also, with this characterization, we aim to separate the debate from the concept of participatory budgeting itself in different contexts. The first section explains how the concept of participation emerged historically, while the second section discusses the development of the idea of participation in public administration and its transformation within the context of governance. The third section explores the manifestation of governance in local governments through city councils and participatory

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<sup>1</sup>Roderick Arthur William Rhodes, 'Governance and Public Administration', in *Debating Governance: Authority, Steering, and Democracy*, ed. Jon Pierre, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 57; Kees Van Kersbergen and Frans Van Waarden, 'Governance as a Bridge Between Disciplines: Cross-Disciplinary Inspiration Regarding Shifts in Governance and Problems of Governability, Accountability and Legitimacy', *European Journal of Political Research* 43, no. 2 (2004): 144–45.

<sup>2</sup>Boaventura de Souza Santos, 'Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre: Toward a Redistributive Democracy', *Politics and Society* 26, no. 4 (1998): 461–510; Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Ernesto Ganuza, 'Participatory Budgeting as if Emancipation Mattered', *Politics & Society* 42, no. 1 (2014): 29–50; and Brian Wampler, 'A Guide to Participatory Budgeting', in *Participatory Budgeting*, ed. Anwar Shah (Washington, DC: World Bank Institute, 2007).

<sup>3</sup>Yves Sintomer, Carsten Herzberg, and Anja Röcke, *Démocratie Participative et Modernisation des Services Publics* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008a); Baogang He, 'Civic Engagement through Participatory Budgeting in China: Three Different Logics at work', *Public Administration and Development* 3, no. 2 (2011): 122–133.

<sup>4</sup>Diane Day, 'Citizen Participation in the Planning Process: An Essentially Contested Concept?' *Journal of Planning Literature* 11, no. 3 (1997): 421–434.

budgeting. The fourth and fifth sections discuss issues in city council practices worldwide and in Türkiye. The sixth section explores the adaptiveness, advantages, and concerns raised by participatory budgeting practices of city councils in unitary-state structures such as Türkiye. And finally, in the seventh section, we discuss our conclusions and suggestions.

## The concept of participation in a historical context

The term ‘participation’ is a multidisciplinary concept that has been used in various contexts, from involvement in a matter to developing a willingness in a process, and it has a complex history. Consequently, there is no single approach that comprehensively covers the historical development of participation. The council structures of the Hittites, Sumerians, and Babylonians indicate that the history of participation in the lands of Anatolia and Mesopotamia is ancient. This is evidenced by the Hittites’ Pan-Ku council, composed of elders and citizens,<sup>5</sup> and the bicameral councils of the Sumerians and Babylonians.<sup>6</sup> In Ancient Greece, the idea of political participation was central to the concept of citizenship, as citizens were expected to actively participate in the governance of society through direct democracy in the city-states (polis). However, citizenship was only accessible to a certain class, and equality was valid only among them.

The medieval period was dominated by the structure of feudalism, during which individuals had no rights to participate in political decisions, which were made solely by the nobility.<sup>7</sup> The idea of participation, revived by the Renaissance movements, was reshaped in the context of equality by the thoughts of social activists and writers such as Rousseau. Over the years, the acquisition of democratic rights such as voting made the concept of participation a more scrutinized subject in the 19th century. During this period, the trajectory and development of the concept of participation played a significant role in the fields of philosophy, politics, society, and education.<sup>8</sup> For instance,<sup>9</sup> argued that reducing inequalities in the system could only be achieved by involving workers in the decision-making process through unions. John Dewey believed that students would learn by thinking, questioning, and researching through active participation in education.<sup>10</sup>

In this context, the 20th century was a period in which social participation was elaborated upon and influenced by the 19th century. Freire developed the famous educational approach called participatory pedagogy, and political scientists like Robert A. Dahl and Sidney Verba analysed the political participation of citizens with a sense of civic duty. During the same period, social psychologists began

<sup>5</sup>Muazzez İlmiye Çığ, *Hititler ve Hattuşa* (Istanbul: Kaynak Publishing, 2005).

<sup>6</sup>Thorkild Jacobsen, ‘Primitive Democracy in Ancient Mesopotamia’, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 2, no. 3 (1943): 159–172; and Samuel Noah Kramer, *Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 1963).

<sup>7</sup>Brian M. Downing, ‘Medieval origins of constitutional government in the west’, *Theory and Society* 18, no. 2 (1989): 213–247.

<sup>8</sup>Julia Tiemann-Kollipost, *Political Participation in the Digital Age An Ethnographic Comparison Between Iceland and Germany* (Bielefeld, DE: Transcript Verlag, 2020), 10–14.

<sup>9</sup>Karl Marx, *Capital* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887).

<sup>10</sup>Julia Tiemann-Kollipost, *Political Participation in the Digital Age An Ethnographic Comparison Between Iceland and Germany* (Bielefeld, DE: Transcript Verlag, 2020), 16–22.

exploring the concept of participation in the context of group dynamics.<sup>11</sup> Kurt Lewin, one of the pioneers of social psychology, developed the concept of participatory leadership and emphasized the importance of involving group members in decision-making processes to promote cooperation and increase group efficiency. During this period, the participation of various segments of society in political and social decisions increased. Especially in the 1960s, social movements such as the student movement, civil rights movement, and feminist movement highlighted the importance of individual participation, and with these movements, social participation gained significance. In the 1980s and 1990s, the concept became a central principle of international development. Scientists and practitioners aimed to empower marginalized groups and promote sustainable development. One of the key figures of this movement, Robert Chambers, emphasized that participatory approaches were essential to understanding the needs of local communities and that participation was necessary for creating more effective and equitable development policies.<sup>12</sup> Fox,<sup>13</sup> from the same school of thought, argued that democratic governance could only be achieved through the active and free participation of citizens in the functioning of the state, influencing contemporary research.

In the 21st century, with the impact of advancing information technologies and the diversification of multidisciplinary research, the concept of participation has been evaluated from different perspectives. In this period, when the concept of governance took shape, analyses began to be conducted at the micro level, such as the organizational level,<sup>14</sup> local level,<sup>15</sup> and macro level, such as the national level.<sup>16</sup> The discussion opened up to the idea that citizens' participation in the political process should not be limited to elections, but that citizens should participate in decision-making processes in their daily lives as well.<sup>17</sup> The trend of participation in environmental policies also took shape through processes that began with the 1972 Stockholm Conference, continued with the 1987 Brundtland Report, and the 1992 Earth Summit.<sup>18</sup> Social participation is an effective tool for achieving sustainability goals, which can be described as a development model that serves the common interest and considers the needs of future generations.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, views emerged that combining participation in the decision-making process with fighting poverty or achieving equity in income

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<sup>11</sup>Elena Andina Díaz and José Siles González, 'The Domestic Participation in Birth Assistance in the Mid-Twentieth Century', *Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem* 24, no. e27227 (2016): 5; and Kenneth Munro, 'Canada as Reflected in her Participation in the Coronation of her Monarchs in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 14, no. 1 (2022): 28–32.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 36–7.

<sup>13</sup>Jonathan Fox, 'How Does Civil Society Thicken? The Political Construction of Social Capital in Rural Mexico', *World Development* 24, no. 6 (1996): 1092.

<sup>14</sup>Karen A. Jehn and Corinne Bendersky, 'Intragroup Conflict in Organizations: A Contingency Perspective on the Conflict-Outcome Relationship', *Research in Organizational Behavior* 25, no. 1 (2003): 187–242.

<sup>15</sup>Baogang Guo, 'Political legitimacy and China's transition', *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 8, no. 1–2 (2003): 1–25; and Archon Fung, 'Putting the Public Back into Governance: The Challenges of Citizen Participation and its Future', *Public Administration Review* 75, no. 4 (2015): 513–22.

<sup>16</sup>Ruth Alsop and Nina Heinsohn, 'Measuring Empowerment in Practice: Structuring Analysis and Framing Indicators', World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 3510 (2005): 1–123.

<sup>17</sup>Archon Fung, 'Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance', *Public Administration Review* 66, no. 12 (2006): 66–75.

<sup>18</sup>Andrew Jordan, 'The Governance of Sustainable Development: Taking Stock and Looking Forwards', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 26, no. 1 (2008): 17–33.

<sup>19</sup>Yunming Kuang and Boqiang Lin, 'Public participation and City Sustainability: Evidence from Urban Garbage Classification in China', *Sustainable Cities and Society* 67, no. 102,741 (2021): 1–11.

distribution could be accomplished by empowering individuals to have more control over solutions.<sup>20</sup>

## Transformation in public administration, governance, and participatory democracy

Discussing the dissemination of an idea and attributing value to it without considering how its circulation and translation fundamentally transform it is neither sufficient nor scientifically rational.<sup>21</sup> In reality, Weber's<sup>22</sup> idealized, rigid, inflexible, rule-bound bureaucracy operating like a machine and its superior status over other institutions<sup>23</sup> represents the classic understanding of public administration. Within this structure, Fayol's<sup>24</sup> centralized, authoritarian, but merit-based disciplined method and Taylor's<sup>25</sup> standardized, impersonal, systematic approach, framed by work diagrams, are essential. Between 1929–1950, marked by global crises such as the Great Depression and World War II, the social state understanding centred on Keynesian policies intensified state intervention under the pressure of insufficient effective demand. These policies predicted state intervention where the price mechanism did not function efficiently or redistribute wealth. The goal was to increase total output and bring the economy to equilibrium through high public expenditures within the framework of fiscal policies until full employment was achieved.<sup>26</sup> This context recognized the need for an evolution in public administration, driven by the efforts to create a welfare state by mitigating economic instabilities through intervention.

In addition to the state's expanding role, the need for transformation emerged from the perspective of policy implementation. Traditional public administration theories, like Weber's bureaucratic model, primarily focus on administrative processes and efficiency rather than the implementation and adaptation of policies. Keynesian policies, however, often require flexible application, access to current data, and rapid communication and coordination among stakeholders within complex interventions. Despite this, the high inflation, budget deficits, stagnation, unemployment, and stagflation resulting from the oil crisis of the 1970s weakened the Keynesian state model.<sup>27</sup> These macro-level instabilities, particularly in high-income countries with significant global influence, led to a shift from state-centric policies to smaller, market-oriented governance approaches.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Derick W. Brinkerhoff, 'Danny Burns, Systemic Action Research: A Strategy for Whole System Change', *Public Organization Review* 10, no. 1 (2010): 93–5; and Lorenzo Cicatiello, Salvatore Ercolano, and Giuseppe Gaeta, 'Income distribution and political participation: A multilevel analysis', *Empirica* 42, no. 2 (2015): 447–79.

<sup>21</sup>Bruno Latour, *Science in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

<sup>22</sup>Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (London, UK: Bedminster Press, 1968), 973–1394.

<sup>23</sup>Hellmut Wollman and Gérard Marceau, 'From Public Sector-based to Privatized Service Provision. Is the Pendulum Swinging Back Again? Comparative Summary', in *The Provision of Public Services in Europe between State, Local Government and Market*, ed. Hellmut Wollman and Gérard Marceau (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010), 214.

<sup>24</sup>Henri Fayol, *General and Industrial Management* (London, UK: Pitman Publishing, 1916).

<sup>25</sup>Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, 2nd edition (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1919).

<sup>26</sup>John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London, UK: Macmillan Publishers, 1936), 378–79.

<sup>27</sup>Brian Snowdon and Howard R. Vane, *Modern Macroeconomics: Its Origins, Development and Current State* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2005), 23.

<sup>28</sup>Hamza Al, *Bilgi Toplumu ve Kamu Yönetimine Paradigma Değişimi*, 3rd edition (Ankara: Vadi Publishing, 2007).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the election of conservative governments in security-focused countries like the U.S.A. and the UK, advocating minimalist state concepts and free-market rhetoric, limited the state's role to creating a defined institutional framework and ensuring its continuity.<sup>29</sup> This approach reinterpreted Peter Drucker's concept of denationalization, facilitating the privatization of state enterprises.<sup>30</sup> This could be seen as eliminating inefficiencies to reduce public cost burdens. Additionally, during this period, fiscal policies in the public sector were consciously reduced, but budget elements were effectively used to slow down and control the money supply instead. However, the immediate impact of these policies resulted in a significant drop in production, accompanied by increased unemployment and a loss of competitive power.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the expected decrease in unemployment did not materialize in the 1980s, external debt levels increased, and successive crises led to heightened poverty and social inequalities.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the occurrence of more significant financial crises at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s compared to the financial crisis of 1929, they did not create a global problem. Therefore, the transformation during this period necessitated regulation in public administration without undermining trust in neoliberal policy.<sup>33</sup> For example, with the disintegration of the USSR, transition economies rapidly moved from centrally planned economies to market economies, forming new markets that presented commercial opportunities while also integrating into international formations and implementing governance reforms within their countries, as seen in the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan and the Color Revolutions in Central Asia. Generally, the 1990s witnessed significant changes in the global economy, including the spread of market-oriented reforms, increased globalization and trade liberalization, technological advancements, and financial developments with both positive and negative impacts.

In addition, the bureaucratic structure's susceptibility to the principal-agent problem and the fact that significant policy decisions are often left to representatives or civil servants due to government officials' agendas have led to the inability to maintain bureaucracy at a certain level, resulting in inefficient decisions.<sup>34</sup> This has, at least theoretically, opened the door to a new quest in public administration and has been one of the factors leading to the development of participatory democracy. In this context, Milton Friedman's<sup>35</sup> statement that researchers within the public sector, while trying to discover how to more effectively manipulate the levers of power, also attempted to persuade government officials—who are assumed to be serving the public interest—towards a better system prioritizing public welfare, is significant for understanding how active these new quests are.

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<sup>29</sup>David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>30</sup>Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw, *The Commanding Heights: The Battle Between Government and the Marketplace That is Remaking the Modern World* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Publishing, 1998), 114.

<sup>31</sup>Willem H. Buiter and Marcus Miller, 'The Thatcher Experiment: The First Two Years', *Brooking Papers on Economic Activity* 12, no. 2 (1981): 317–18.

<sup>32</sup>Tuba Ongun, 'The World economy from the 1980's to the global crisis', *Ekonomik Yaklaşım Journal* 23, no. Special Issue (2012): 46–9.

<sup>33</sup>Meltem Kayıran, 'Kamu malları: Piyasa başarısızlığı mı teorilerin başarısızlığı mı?', *Ankara University SBF Journal* 68, no. 4 (2013): 150.

<sup>34</sup>Gordon Tullock and James M. Buchanan, *The Politics of Bureaucracy* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1965); and Anthony Downs, *Inside Bureaucracy* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1967).

<sup>35</sup>Milton Friedman, 'John Maynard Keynes', *Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond Economic Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (1997): 22.

In this area, new public management and entrepreneurial government approaches, which have shaped the understanding of managing the state structure more efficiently and effectively since the second half of the 20th century, have converged under the umbrella of governance, despite containing considerable ambiguity. It is important to note that discussions and theories related to governance, albeit under different terms and frameworks, have existed throughout history. Researchers<sup>36</sup> have made significant contributions to the understanding and examination of governance. Rhodes<sup>37</sup> describes governance as the inclusion of the individual in the process, akin to the state, by depicting mechanisms for direct participation and collaboration. The transition from a monolithic centralized structure to a pluralistic central structure involves mechanisms where individuals who meet the voting criteria participate in decisions through direct democracy, both online and offline. Beyond this, it is essential to establish a collective, public interest-oriented, and trust-based system where clear and transparent information is provided, and policies are determined through consensus processes in assemblies. The aim is to form a management model within the framework of modern public administration that reflects the will and interests of the people, emphasizing efficiency, inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability.<sup>38</sup>

Participation, having become a legitimate right since the 18th century, is a fundamental element of democracy in public administration. The idea of including those served in the system, introduced at the 1978 World Health Organization's Alma-Ata conference, coupled in the 1990s with the notion of social contribution at the stages of planning, decision-making, and evaluation, has made participation a form of implementing democracy.<sup>39</sup> In modern acceptance, participation is a mechanism that enables individuals to be present, contribute, and have a say in the democratic process. Those included in this mechanism are not only natural persons but also public institutions and non-state organizations. The involvement of these elements, regardless of being natural or legal persons, does not necessarily imply that participation will occur; it is sufficient that the opportunity for participation exists.<sup>40</sup> As participation is a tool in participatory democracy, it is a political ideology emphasizing the active involvement of individuals, described as citizens who are competent to vote, in public decision-making processes. Like any ideology, it is broad-based in its principles and aims to mean more than just voting, focusing on the individual's presence at every stage of the political process. Despite being the entity with the highest intensity of association with the state, yet the least attention, as defined by Aristotle,<sup>41</sup> the individual has become the focal point of the process within the new understanding. Therefore, it is not surprising that the idea of the

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<sup>36</sup>Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, 1st edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, *Governance without Government: Order and Change in the World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>37</sup>Roderick Arthur William Rhodes, 'The New Governance: Governing Without Government', *Political Studies* 44, no. 4 (1996): 652.

<sup>38</sup>David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1992), 83.

<sup>39</sup>John Brohman, *Popular Development: Rethinking the Theory and Practice of Development* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1996).

<sup>40</sup>Danny Burns, Colin C. Williams, and Jan Windebank, *Community Self-Help* (London, UK: Macmillan Publishers, 2004): 2.

<sup>41</sup>Garrett Hardin, 'The Tragedy of Commons', *Science. News Series* 162, no. 3859 (1968): 1244.

individual being present throughout the entire governance process, shaped by the desires and preferences of the citizens, is the cornerstone of the governance concept.<sup>42</sup>

## Participation in governance, city councils, and participatory budgeting in local governments

The idea of participation essentially emerged from the desire of communities in decision-making regions to be involved in the decision-making process, realizing the deficiencies of hierarchical decision-making processes.<sup>43</sup> Participation is a structure that should be built on empowerment and control, from planning to implementation and management.<sup>44</sup> Within this structure, citizens transition from merely voting and responding to questions to organizing questions, asking questions, managing the process, and implementing public policies.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, citizen participation in local governments is advocated as an effective method to reduce citizens' distrust and educate them about state activities. Local governments, aiming to meet the desires and needs of the local population, strive to implement governance, symbolizing a participatory, accountable, transparent, and satisfaction-oriented management approach of our era.<sup>46</sup> Local administrations are the most accessible extension of democratic life for individuals and the primary provider of services to satisfy the collective needs of the public.<sup>47</sup> The 1992 Maastricht Treaty, based on the principle of subsidiarity, states that the most effective and rapid service delivery to citizens can only be achieved through local governments, which are the closest public service providers to the citizens. In this context, Habermas<sup>48</sup> argues that the principle of locality meets the needs of various and regionally different units of a federation or a country, compensating for the dimensions of regional, population, economic, and political power, and cultural or collective differences. The fundamental logic of subsidiarity is that in a democratic order, citizens are the ultimate decision-makers among sovereigns and stakeholders. It encourages consistent communication among sub-agents for the smooth functioning of the central-local government sharing system, as it promotes the discussion and decision-making process of an issue from the bottom up.<sup>49</sup> The decentralization aligns with participatory democracy's emphasis on citizen and grassroots participation.<sup>50</sup> Integrating locality within the framework of participatory democracy facilitates more inclusive decision-making processes, promotes

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<sup>42</sup>Hamza Ateş and Gökçe Ceren Buyruk, 'Participation as a Principle of Good Governance and Location of Participation in Turkish Public Administration', *Ombudsman Akademik Special Issue*, no. 1 (2018): 85–6.

<sup>43</sup>Sue Fleming, 'Between the Household: Researching Community Organisation and Networks', *IDS Bulletin* 22 no. 1 (1991): 37.

<sup>44</sup>John Brohman, *Popular Development: Rethinking the Theory and Practice of Development* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1996): 252.

<sup>45</sup>Geraint Parry, George Moyser, and Neil Day, *Political Participation and Democracy in Britain* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 16.

<sup>46</sup>H. Burçin Henden and Rifki Henden, 'Yerel yönetimlerin hizmet sunumlarındaki değişim ve e-belediyecilik', *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 14 (2005): 49.

<sup>47</sup>Zerrin Toprak, *Yerel Yönetimler* (Ankara: Siyasal Publishing), 39.

<sup>48</sup>Jürgen Habermas, 'Why Europe Needs a Constitution', in *Developing a Constitution for Europe*, ed. Erik Oddvar Eriksen, John Erik Fossum, and Agustín José Menéndez (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004): 32.

<sup>49</sup>Robert Gawłowski, Saulius Nefas, and Krzysztof Makowski, 'Subsidiarity Principle—Its Realization in Self-Government in Lithuania and Poland', *Administrative Sciences* 10, no. 14 (2020): 1–2.

<sup>50</sup>David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 3rd edition (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2006): 264.

governance, and helps public administration understand and address special needs and desires through the perception of decentralized approaches.

The efficiency and inclusiveness of governance can only be realized through community participation. Community participation refers to the processes that provide opportunities for a community to be involved in government decision-making and influence public officials.<sup>51</sup> It is essential to incorporate the principles of participatory democracy, which emphasize the active involvement of citizens in all these processes.<sup>52</sup> In local governments, this is achieved through city councils. City councils are institutions established to increase local participation and democracy, acting as a bridge between civil society organizations, residents, and municipal administration. These councils are local government bodies consisting of numerous elected members who define and establish budgets and policy agendas within the framework of the law.<sup>53</sup> However, rather than being a binding official legislative body like a municipal council, they serve as an advisory board formed by citizens, demonstrating true participation in the democratic process by electing council members authorized to make decisions on their behalf.<sup>54</sup> This participation involves including community members, residents, and stakeholders, and fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among citizens. Councils can identify and address the views and demands of the local population and make recommendations to the municipal administration on these issues. Indeed, the recommendations of city councils are considered influential in shaping local policies.<sup>55</sup> They also bring together civil society organizations under their umbrella to contribute to local policy-making.<sup>56</sup> City councils can ensure that the voices and perspectives of community members are heard through public sessions, consultations, and municipal meetings. By these means, city councils promote greater participation and transparency in local governance.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, participation, described as the tendon' heel of governance,<sup>58</sup> is an essential component of democracy and concurrently entails decentralization.<sup>59</sup> Although democracy and decentralization converge on the priority of citizenry, there are many situations where decentralization does not align with democratic outcomes. Litvack and Seddon<sup>60</sup> describe decentralization as the devil in the details. At this juncture, the management aspects of city councils, which must exist at the local government level closest to the citizen, with careful calibration of decentralization, must be well defined, as

<sup>51</sup> Alison Bradford, 'Community Engagement and Local Government. University of Wollongong Thesis Collections', <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5900&context=theses>, 4. (Accessed May 15, 2024).

<sup>52</sup> Mustafa Kocaoğlu, 'The Relationship of Participatory Democracy and City Councils: A Comparative Analysis Through Kirsehir and Yozgat City Councils', *Procedia Economics and Finance* 23, no. (2015): 1545.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Vargas, Christina Cano, Paola Del Toro, and Brian Fenaughty, 'The Racial and Economic Foundations of Municipal Redistricting', *Social Problems* 70, no. 4 (2023): 935–36.

<sup>54</sup> Alison Bradford, 'Community Engagement and Local Government. University of Wollongong Thesis Collections', <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5900&context=theses>, 26–7. (Accessed May 15, 2024).

<sup>55</sup> Gözde Kestellioğlu, 'A Qualitative Perspective on City Councils from the Perspective of NGOs in Türkiye', *İdealkent* 39, no. 15 (2023): 127–29.

<sup>56</sup> Rafet Çevikbaş, 'Yerel yönetimlerde siyaset katılımı', *Türk İdare Journal* 12, no. 2 (2008), 81.

<sup>57</sup> Özhan Çetinkaya and Rükan Kutlu Korlu, 'Participatory Process in Enabling Local Democracy and the Role of City Councils', *Maliye Journal* 163, (2012): 102.

<sup>58</sup> Diane Day, 'Citizen Participation in the Planning Process: An Essentially Contested Concept?' *Journal of Planning Literature* 11, no. 3 (1997): 421.

<sup>59</sup> Caroline Patsias, Anne Latendresse, and Laurence Bherer, 'Participatory democracy, decentralization, and local governance: The Montreal participatory budget in the light of empowered participatory governance', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 6 (2012): 1.

<sup>60</sup> Jennie Litvack and Jessica Seddon, *Decentralization Briefing Notes* (Washington, DC: World Bank Institute, 1999).

participation is an integral part of participatory democracy. Indeed, participation can lead to local autonomy capable of self-governance without central administration,<sup>61</sup> posing a danger at the intersection of participation, governance, and local governments.

The council-manager model, which emerged as one of the outcomes of local government reform in the United States in the mid-20th century, essentially shaped city councils from the voter (shareholder) to the mayor (CEO), like the structure of a commercial corporation,<sup>62</sup> differentiating ancient city councils. Given that the ultimate aim of a commercial firm is profit maximization, the importance of the budget, reflecting and balancing all matters related to the profitability of this firm, is evident. This system theoretically represents the manifestation of the entrepreneurial urban governance model, but it is not unique among local governance models. It is argued that the institutional urban governance model, in a budget system where social participation is ignored, will bring about the issue of fiscal discipline, which is an inherent problem of a governance system prioritizing political profit maximization.<sup>63</sup> In this context, it is crucial to create and utilize a budget system that aligns with the understanding of local governance, spreads benefits through pluralistic participation, and ensures no institution or organization can derive additional benefits for maximizing collective welfare.

Moreover, the budget plays a role in all these governance models in terms of optimizing resource allocation with minimal cost. Governance aims to maximize the delivery of public services by economically using public resources and combating corruption.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, for city councils based on governance to succeed, the active participation necessary for governance<sup>65</sup> forms the foundation of a budget understanding prepared within the framework of the pillars of governance, namely legality, accountability, and efficiency.<sup>66</sup> This foundation is the participatory budget concept. City councils organize participatory budgeting at the local level through funds set aside from municipal budgets and contributions from citizens. Essentially, the portion allocated from the municipal budget is considered an investment fund and is termed a participatory budget.<sup>67</sup> When the budget, which realizes public policies in practice,<sup>68</sup> incorporates the active participation of citizens in budget decisions, it can be defined as a budgeting practice constructed to influence resource allocation.<sup>69</sup> However, the narrowest definition of participatory budgeting is a process allowing the community to decide how to spend a portion of the public budget allocated for public project improvements. The broader definition includes being open to all citizens, combining direct and representative democracy,

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<sup>61</sup>Harold Wollman and Michael Goldsmith, *Urban Politics and Policy* (London, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1992): 45.

<sup>62</sup>COD [City of Durham], 'History of the Council/Manager Form of Government', <https://www.durhamnc.gov/290/History-of-the-CouncilManager-Form-of-Go>. (Accessed May 10, 2024).

<sup>63</sup>M. Akif Özer, 'Kentsel iyi yönetim/yönetişim (governance) modeli', *Gazi University Journal of Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences* 4, no. 3 (2002): 173–74.

<sup>64</sup>Zuhal Ergen, 'From governing to governance: Participatory budgeting model', *Maliye Journal* 163, no. 2 (2012), 322.

<sup>65</sup>P. Khan Shehrin, 'Kent Yönetimi ve Planlamada Yönetişim', in *Yönetişim: Kuram, Boyutlar, Uygulama*, ed. M. Akif Çukurçayır and H. Tuğba Eroğlu (Konya: Çizgi Publishing, 2010): 268.

<sup>66</sup>Hamit Palabıyık, 'Yönetimden Yönetişime: Yönetişim, Kentsel Yönetişim ve Uygulamaları ile Yönetişimde Ölçülebilirlik Üzerine Açıklamalar', in *Yerel ve Kentsel Politikalar*, ed. M. Akif Çukurçayır and Ayşe Tekel (Konya: Çizgi Publishing, 2003), 233–36.

<sup>67</sup>Ahmet Özen and Güray İbrahim Yontar, 'Budgeting in View of Participatory Democracy: Participatory Budgeting', *Maliye Journal* 156, no. 1 (2009): 286.

<sup>68</sup>Zuhal Ergen, 'From Governing to Governance: Participatory Budgeting Model', *Maliye Journal* 163, no. 2 (2012), 317.

<sup>69</sup>Luca Bartocci, Giuseppe Grossi, Sara Giovanna Mauro, and Carol Ebdon, 'The journey of participatory budgeting: A Systematic Literature Review and Future Research Directions', *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 89, no. 3 (2022): 2.

and incorporating not only consultation but also negotiation, self-regulation, and redistribution to the poor.<sup>70</sup>

Ebdon and Franklin<sup>71</sup> argue that citizen involvement in the budgeting process is primarily related to the environment, process design, mechanisms, purpose-outcomes, governance structure, political structure, legal obligations, and population size and densities. Participatory budgeting is fundamentally a mechanism that aids in localizing the Sustainable Development Goals in cities and local government administrations.<sup>72</sup> At the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, Chapter 28, Section III called for the support of local governments' environmental issues through a multi-participatory process involving civil society organizations at local, national, regional, and international levels. In this context, references to budget applications were made throughout the relevant articles of the text (see 3.4.d; 12.48.e; 14.38.a; 14.73; 18.76.a; 21.13; 36.7.a; 37.6). For participatory budgeting at the local level, the involvement of development councils, local community committees, and similar entities was advised (see 18.21). The initial formation of participatory budgets is a sectoral or thematic participatory budget type. Beyond this type, actor-based participatory budgets aimed at involving disadvantaged groups such as youth, women, the elderly, and immigrants, as well as participatory budgets targeting planning, observation, and management through citizen participation in a neighbourhood, are also present. The common goal of all these budgets is to enhance the sense of ownership and responsibility in the area where the citizens live by using public material resources and personnel, and to help local governments reduce public costs.<sup>73</sup> However, participatory budgeting should not be thought of as the main budget or the entirety of a local government's budget, but rather as a portion set aside by the local government to carry out tasks and operations with citizen contributions.<sup>74</sup> It should also be considered a budget spread over a full fiscal year within a recurring cycle and performed according to a predetermined schedule.<sup>75</sup>

According to Allegretti, participatory budgeting is not merely about opening communication channels between citizens and local governments. It also aims to address locally specific socio-regional issues, influence the management of local resources, make public projects more citizen-centric, provide more effective and equitable public service delivery, improve education, ensure better housing conditions for citizens living in social housing, organize local climate actions, increase accountability of public decisions, and transparency of administrations, strengthen

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<sup>70</sup>Yves Cabannes, 'Contribution of Participatory Budgeting to Provision and Management of Basic Services: Municipal Practices and Evidence from the Field', *International Institute for Environment and Development Working Paper No. 10,713* (2014): 5.

<sup>71</sup>Carol Ebdon, and Aimee L. Franklin, 'Citizen Participation in Budgeting Theory', *Public Administration Review* 66, no. 1 (2006): 438.

<sup>72</sup>Giovanni Allegretti, 'Participatory Budgeting', United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs CEPA (United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration) Strategy Guidance Note 2022, <https://www.oidp.net/docs/repo/doc1198.pdf> (Accessed May 14, 2024).

<sup>73</sup>Yves Cabannes, 'Contribution of Participatory Budgeting to Provision and Management of Basic Services: Municipal Practices and Evidence from the Field', *International Institute for Environment and Development Working Paper No. 10,713* (2014): 6–7.

<sup>74</sup>Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Ernesto Ganuza, 'Participatory Budgeting as if Emancipation Mattered', *Politics & Society* 42, no. 1 (2014), 42.

<sup>75</sup>Süreyya Sakinç and Sibel Aybarç Bursalioğlu, 'A Democratic Change in Budgeting: Participatory Budgeting', *Electronic Journal of Vocational Colleges* 4, no. 1 (2014): 2.

decentralized governance, reduce poverty, and coordinate different institutions within the community.<sup>76</sup>

While each city council or local government can adapt the process differently according to their needs and resources, the initial phase of the participatory budgeting process typically involves announcing the budget process to citizens registered in a council group and creating motivation for their participation. Subsequently, educational and informational programs are provided to the potential participants to evaluate the projects they would prefer or request investments for. If participation in the theoretically open-to-all citizen budget process is achieved, the next phase involves collecting general and specific opinions from the citizens. At this stage, civil society organizations within the city council, the citizens themselves, or the legitimate local administration can obtain opinions and suggestions through tools such as full or semi-structured interviews, surveys, etc. The collected opinions are subjected to a series of technical, financial, and fiscal evaluations, including cost-benefit and cost-efficiency analyses. Cabannes<sup>77</sup> states that although everyone's opinions are considered in the first round, only the representatives elected by the participants continue the process in the second phase, neighbourhood meetings. All views obtained by the city council are discussed during the decision-making phase regarding the implementation of the relevant project, where preferences are reconciled. Generally, if a decision is made to implement the project through a simple majority vote, the local government incorporates this plan into its budget proposal and discusses it with its legislative body for approval. The process concludes with the monitoring and evaluation phases following the project's implementation.<sup>78</sup>

## Participatory budgeting implementations of city councils in the world

The initial examples of participatory approaches that encourage active citizenship and place communities at the centre of decision-making and implementation emerged within the framework of participatory programs driven by development motivations. Initiatives that began in the early 20th century in countries such as India, the U.S.A., and the UK aimed at the development of local populations, and the rural reconstruction movements that arose during the same period, along with Quaker Programs that focused on post-1945 wartime community assistance and the reconstruction of affected areas, and citizen participation programs implemented in the U.S.A. since the 1950s,<sup>79</sup> are early examples of multi-dimensional participatory programs that are inclusive and cooperative, involving bottom-up demand articulation and citizen participation in planning, implementation, and policy development. Participatory budgeting, shaped by various influences and experiences, has developed over time as a specific form of participatory program.

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<sup>76</sup>Giovanni Allegretti, 'Participatory Budgeting', United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs CEPA (United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration) Strategy Guidance Note 2022, <https://www.oidp.net/docs/repo/doc1198.pdf> (Accessed May 14, 2024).

<sup>77</sup>Yves Cabannes, 'Contribution of Participatory Budgeting to Provision and Management of Basic Services: Municipal Practices and Evidence from the Field', *International Institute for Environment and Development Working Paper* No. 10,713 (2014), 28.

<sup>78</sup>Brian Wampler, 'A Guide to Participatory Budgeting', in *Participatory Budgeting*, ed. Anwar Shah (Washington, DC: World Bank Institute, 2007), 27–30.

<sup>79</sup>Diane Day, 'Citizen Participation in the Planning Process: An Essentially Contested Concept?' *Journal of Planning Literature* 11, no. 3 (1997), 422.

Initially limited to small towns with low populations and a consultative role in decision-making, participatory budgeting first appeared on a large city scale in Porto Alegre in 1989.<sup>80</sup> This city example, shaped by leftist ideological views, featured the intricate details of participatory budgeting that facilitated mutual understanding and learning among different agents through combinations of direct and representative democratic forms, addressing complexities in policy implementations and various needs.<sup>81</sup> Despite being considered a relatively successful example, Porto Alegre also faced challenges in participatory budgeting. Souza<sup>82</sup> argued that the presence of individuals culturally linked to political parties distanced local administrations from obtaining real social demands, that projects demanded by citizens either encountered resource shortages or exceeded the limits of what the local administration could accomplish, and that socially reputable individuals in the region found more opportunities for representation, while youth and disadvantaged groups were less represented. Nevertheless, the success of Porto Alegre led to the adoption of participatory budgeting in other cities in Brazil and beyond. Over time, the idea spread through international organizations such as the UN and the World Bank to Europe, Africa, Asia, and North America.<sup>83</sup> The model has been adapted and modified to fit different contexts and political systems. As participatory budgeting has become widespread, various iterations have emerged that provide flexibility in design and implementation while maintaining the core principles of citizen participation and decision-making in budget processes. Examples of participatory budgeting across the world include Montevideo-Uruguay in 1990, Belo Horizonte-Brazil in 1993, Dondo-Mozambique in 1998, Cordoba-Argentina, Catalonia-Spain, and Rome-Italy in 2000, Rosario-Argentina, Dublin-Ireland, Toronto-Canada, and Cochabamba-Bolivia in 2001, Quito-Ecuador and Tomar-Portugal in 2002, Lima-Peru, San Jose-Costa Rica, Seville-Spain, and Medellin-Colombia in 2004, La Plata-Argentina in 2005, Buenos Aires-Argentina, Cascais-Portugal, and Caracas-Venezuela in 2006, Chengdu-China in 2007, Lisbon-Portugal in 2008, Chicago-U.S.A. in 2009, and Paris-France in 2002/2014.

When examining examples of participatory budgeting in Latin American countries, one can observe many positive impacts, from increasing transparency to strengthening infrastructure and capacity building. Latin American countries, with over three hundred examples, are the leading countries in participatory budgeting. Peru's national government is the first to mandate the adoption of participatory budgeting systems by all sub-national governments worldwide.<sup>84</sup> For instance, participatory budgeting in Iquitos has resulted in the allocation of funds for infrastructure projects. In Medellín, Colombia, participatory budgeting has played a significant role in reducing poverty and inequality

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<sup>80</sup>Giovanni Allegretti, 'Participatory Budgeting', United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs CEPA (United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration) Strategy Guidance Note 2022, <https://www.oidp.net/docs/repo/doc1198.pdf>. (Accessed May 14, 2024).

<sup>81</sup>Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Ernesto Ganuza, 'Participatory budgeting as if emancipation mattered', *Politics & Society* 42, no. 1 (2014), 33; Luca Bartocci, Giuseppe Grossi, Sara Giovanna Mauro, and Carol Ebdon, 'The journey of participatory budgeting: A Systematic Literature Review and Future Research Directions', *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 89, no. 3 (2022), 2.

<sup>82</sup>Celina Souza, 'Participatory Budgeting in Brazilian Cities: Limits and Possibilities in Building Democratic Institutions', *Environment and Urbanization* 13, no. 1 (2001): 179.

<sup>83</sup>Giovanni Allegretti and Carsten Herzberg, 'Participatory Budgets in Europe: Between Efficiency and Growing Local Democracy', *Transnational Institute and the Centre for Democratic Policy-Making Briefing Series*, no. 5 (2004): 3.

<sup>84</sup>Brian Wampler, Stephanie McNulty, and Michael Touchton, 'Where It All Began: PB in Latin America', in *Participatory Budgeting in Global Perspective*, ed. Brian Wampler, Stephanie McNulty, and Michael Touchton (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2021), 82.

by implementing direct action plans for the disadvantaged. In Quito, Ecuador, funds have been allocated for environmentally friendly infrastructure through participatory budgeting. In Buenos Aires, Argentina, rapid steps have been taken to address urgent local challenges such as housing, water, and sanitation facilities for disadvantaged groups like immigrants. However, the challenges encountered in participatory budgeting in Latin American countries tend to be similar. The most common challenge is the insufficiency of local government resources to implement projects demanded by citizens. Additionally, class power dynamics within communities can sabotage the participatory budget process, with those able to form power blocs easily manipulating the system to their advantage compared to minority groups. Furthermore, due to the socio-cultural and socio-demographic characteristics of the region, the low level of education limits citizens' awareness of budget creation, project support or rejection, and the technical skills and competencies needed to complete a project.

Participatory budgeting was introduced to Europe by France, Spain, and Italy in 2001 and began to gain general acceptance by 2005.<sup>85</sup> The implementations in these countries are still considered the best examples of participatory budgeting. Between 2001 and 2023, the number of participatory budgeting implementations in Europe ranged from 4577 to 4676, with Eastern and Southern European countries hosting 46% of these implementations, Western Europe approximately 5%, and Northern countries around 3%.<sup>86</sup>

About a decade ago, Sintomer et al.<sup>87</sup> proposed that participatory budgeting in Europe might either remain a non-politically influential policy practice as an alternative to neoliberal globalization or, less likely, evolve towards genuine participation. When examining European examples, it is more beneficial to separate countries into transition economies and others, as their experiences with free markets and views on public centralization are almost opposed. While countries like the Netherlands, Czechia, Estonia, and Serbia have small local government structures, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, and Lithuania have larger local government structures, though fiscal control is inversely related to these structures. For example, in Poland, local governments are seen as responsible for providing all services at the local level, yet citizens generally think public participation ends at the ballot box and are not particularly interested in how elected officials spend public funds, operating the process without realizing that budgetary participation can guide and limit management.<sup>88</sup> Conversely, in Central and Eastern European countries, citizen participation in budgets is limited due to citizen apathy and the incomprehensibility of the budget for them.<sup>89</sup> For example, Belarus uses a participatory budget system based on an extra-budgetary fund structured by European organizations. While the system is desired to be sustained by public officials due to the funds they possess without using their resources, leading to important

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<sup>85</sup>European Parliament, 'Participatory Budgeting: An Innovative Approach. 2016 Briefing', [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573894/EPRS\\_BRI\(2016\)573894\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573894/EPRS_BRI(2016)573894_EN.pdf). (Accessed May 23, 2024).

<sup>86</sup>PBWWA, 'Participatory Budgeting World Atlas 2023', <https://www.pbatlas.net/europe.html>(Accessed May 23, 2024).

<sup>87</sup>Yves Sintomer, Carsten Herzberg, and Anja Röcke, 'Participatory budgeting in Europe: Potentials and challenges', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, no. 1 (2008b), 169.

<sup>88</sup>Jan Filas, Tony Levitas, and Marzena Piszczek, 'Local Government Budgeting: Poland. Local Government Budgeting', ed. Michael Högye, (Budapest: IGI Global, 2002).

<sup>89</sup>Michael Högye and Charles McFerren, 'Local government budgeting: The Central and Eastern European experience', *Society and Economy*, 25 no. 1 (2002), 55.

outcomes in resolving local government expenditure problems by involving citizens in the process, the lack of legal conditions and regulations, and the poor understanding of their rights by individuals prevent the achievement of the desired result.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, examining the fiscal decentralization steps of transition countries with weak fiscal autonomy reveals that the success chances of participatory budgeting in these countries, where high control over public revenues and expenditures is not evident, are also limited.<sup>91</sup>

In Western and Central Europe, countries with different administrative systems and traditions are seen to share a common European identity rather than a common ancestral culture, unlike transition countries. In Germany, while decision-making authority over the municipal budget initially belonged solely to elected representatives in official elections, participatory budgeting was implemented, allowing 54% to make budget proposals, but only 4% had a say in the budget draft.<sup>92</sup> In Italy, the budget system is even suggested to be dominated by a political party or a politician.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, Cellini and Antonucci<sup>94</sup> found in their research in Milan, Italy's second-largest city, that those participating in the budget process were older, wealthier, better educated, and more politically active than the average city resident, thus failing to represent the true fundamental cross-sections of the city. Consequently, both the Italian and German examples suggest that the budget system, not theoretically but practically, is open to the tyranny of the minority in the financial system. The Paris City Council, which prepared and implemented the largest participatory budgeting in Europe in 2014, has become one of the best-regarded experiences among implementations. However, even in this example, it is argued that by supporting micro-projects at the neighbourhood level, participation is limited and, in this budget system with undefined boundaries, local administrators solidify their dominance by taking on the role of president to address issues.<sup>95</sup>

## Participatory budgeting implementations of city councils in Türkiye

In Türkiye, city councils originated from Local Agenda 21, initiated in Türkiye in 1997 with the support of the UN during the UN Conference on Environment and Development. The city councils, established during this process and voluntarily implemented by more than 60 municipalities, were later incorporated into the new municipal law in 2005.

<sup>90</sup>Yuri V. Krivorotko and Dmitry Sokol, 'Participatory Budgeting in Belarus', in *International Trends in Participatory Budgeting*, ed. Michiel S. De Vries, Juraj Nemeč, and David Špaček (Birmingham, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2022), [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-79930-4\\_5](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-79930-4_5).

<sup>91</sup>Jelizaveta Krenjova and Ringa Raudla, 'Participatory Budgeting at the Local Level: Challenges and Opportunities for New Democracies', *Halduskultuur—Administrative Culture* 14, no. 1 (2013): 34–7.

<sup>92</sup>Janina Apostolou and Martina Eckardt, 'Participatory Budgeting in Germany: Increasing Transparency in Times of Fiscal Stress', in *International Trends in Participatory Budgeting*, ed. Michiel S. De Vries, Juraj Nemeč, and David Špaček (Birmingham, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2022). [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-79930-4\\_5](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-79930-4_5).

<sup>93</sup>Matteo Bassoli, 'Participatory Budgeting in Italy: An Analysis of Almost Democratic Participatory Governance Arrangements', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36, no. 6 (2011): 1183–1203; Francesco Badia, 'Participatory Budgeting in Italy: A Phoenix Rising from the Ashes', in *International Trends in Participatory Budgeting*, ed. Michiel S. De Vries, Juraj Nemeč, and David Špaček (Birmingham, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2022), [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-79930-4\\_5](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-79930-4_5).

<sup>94</sup>Marco Cellini and Maria Cristina Antonucci, 'For the Few and Under Specific Conditions. Participatory Budgeting in Milan: Evidence from an Online Survey on pb Participants in Italy's second largest city', *Contemporary Italian Politics* 14, no. 3 (2022): 352–69.

<sup>95</sup>Anja Röcke, *Framing Citizen Participation: Participatory Budgeting in France, Germany and the United Kingdom* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9781137326669>; and Gil Pradeau, 'Participatory Budgeting in France: Opening Local Budgets or Lipservice?' European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) General Conference Paper 2018 Hamburg, <https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PaperDetails/41073> (Accessed May 30, 2024).



strengthened in 2009 when the Architects' Chamber President was elected as council head.<sup>98</sup> Despite its long-standing activity, structural and functional deficiencies persist in the Antalya city council. Structurally, gaps in membership data hinder tracking participation trends, and excessive meeting documentation risks agenda deviations. Limited use of communication tools further weakens outreach. Functionally, while councils are autonomous, municipal ties compromise independence. Although participation rhetoric is strong, it is not a core mechanism. The council's outdated website and lack of transparency in project outcomes further reduce public engagement. To enhance effectiveness, the council must adopt more participatory and transparent practices. Bursa City Council, categorized under the second model, comprises various assemblies (women, youth, disabled, children, and foreigners) and 30 working groups. Its development stems from both local and international influences. Initially, Neighborhood Consultation and Solidarity Centers (SEDAM) were established, bringing together local government representatives, public institutions, professional chambers, and NGOs. This later expanded into the City Consultation and Solidarity Council, promoting grassroots participation and citizen-municipality collaboration. Originally formed in 1995 with Bursa Metropolitan Municipality's support, the council evolved into its current structure. Its most impactful participatory initiative is the Bursa Speaks meetings, held at least twice annually since 1995, open to all and agenda-driven by public suggestions. Reports indicate these meetings remain central to council activities, focusing on public awareness, education, and social issues. Various working groups actively engage citizens in public decision-making. Additionally, the council was tasked with coordinating the Master Plan and the 1/100,000 Environmental Plan, reflecting strong municipal collaboration. Despite lacking a fully institutionalized participation model, the council's initiatives introduce and encourage citizen involvement. Its structured efforts make it one of Türkiye's most effective city councils in fostering public participation.<sup>99</sup>

Alike, Bursa Nilüfer Municipality promotes direct citizen participation through a participatory budgeting system, allocating 5–20% of its budget based on public proposals and votes, enhancing transparency and accountability. To strengthen neighbourhood-level participation, neighbourhood committees have been established, with one-third quotas for women and youth. These elected committees identify local priorities and contribute to strategic planning, ensuring municipal policies align with community needs. This model has led to tangible outcomes, such as expanded parks, bike lanes, recycling projects, improved playgrounds, elderly services, and women's entrepreneurship programs, demonstrating its effectiveness in participatory democracy. Bağcılar Municipality's İPEK initiative allows both employees and citizens to evaluate municipal services, fostering continuous improvement. Additionally, by publishing council commission decisions and reports online, the municipality enhances transparency and enables public feedback, reinforcing accountability despite closed commission meetings.<sup>100</sup> The participatory budgeting initiative known as the 'Çanakkale Example' can be considered another significant case that aligns with global practices in this field. Although the final decision was not made directly by the public, the efforts, which initially emerged entirely

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 127–9.

<sup>100</sup>Burak Hamza Eryiğit and Yusuf Bilgi, 'Kent Yönetiminde Yerel Katılım', *Research Centre for Social Thought and Policy (TODAM) Policy Notes* No. 61 (2024): 8–9, accessed January 28, 2025, <http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pn061>.

through civil society initiatives, facilitated a project selection process in which the options were narrowed down to two. The Çanakkale initiative aimed to involve the public in determining the future function of Zafer Square and its surroundings, an area with historical significance in the city. The process began with the establishment of a civil initiative called the Çanakkale Houses Preservation Project (ÇEYAP). This initiative brought the discussion to the 1996 Istanbul Habitat II Summit and, by 2007, in collaboration with the local municipality, led to the development of two alternative proposals for the square's future, formulated entirely based on public preferences. However, while the final proposals were shaped by public input, the ultimate decision was made by the municipality, which selected and implemented the first proposal.<sup>101</sup> Following the implementation of this proposal, the Çanakkale City Council was established as an independent yet coordinated entity, operating without direct affiliation with the municipality. Founded in 2004 and aligned with the 2006 City Council Regulation, the council encompasses women, disability, environment, sports, and culture & arts assemblies, along with seven neighbourhood assemblies and 36 working groups. It operates under the principles of enhancing public participation, strengthening civil society organizations (CSOs), and ensuring the involvement of urban actors in decision-making processes. One of its most notable initiatives is the Working Group Against Violence Towards Women and Children, launched in 2015 as an awareness campaign that later evolved into a large-scale movement, executed in collaboration with women's associations, public institutions, and neighbourhood assemblies. As a result of this initiative, participants established the 'We Have Rights' Association, continuing their efforts independently. Another significant initiative is the Voters' Declaration, designed to institutionalize public demands. Developed through extensive public engagement, the declaration was publicly displayed in urban spaces, refined based on citizen feedback, and subsequently submitted to the municipality. Furthermore, City Council representatives actively participate in the Municipal Council's Specialized Commissions, contributing expert opinions to decision-making processes. The Çanakkale City Council is recognized as a successful model in public governance, fostering participatory democracy and ensuring citizen engagement in policymaking.<sup>102</sup>

Advancements in information technologies also contribute to participatory budgeting practices in Türkiye, where e-participatory budgeting is implemented within a limited scope through artificial intelligence technologies. Antalya Muratpaşa Municipality pioneered the country's first digital democracy platform. Through the Komşu Meclisi (Neighbourhood Assembly), a designated portion of the municipal budget is allocated based on citizen proposals. Budget transfers to the platform are made with consideration of fiscal balance and are announced annually in August. The specific service areas where the allocated budget will be utilized are also disclosed within the same period. Citizens can submit project proposals via the 'Bir Fikrim Var' (I Have an Idea) section, which, after review by the advisory board, are put to a vote. All district residents aged 13 and above are eligible to participate in digital voting. The selected projects are subsequently implemented. The e-participatory budgeting system of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality remains

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<sup>101</sup>Giovanni Allegretti and Mehmet Koçdemir, 'Participatory Budgeting Practices: Comparison of Turkey and Portugal Experiences', *Journal of Turkish Court of Accounts* 32, no. 123 (2021): 120–1.

<sup>102</sup>İtibar Aydemir Uslu and Hakkı Hakan Yılmaz, 'Participation in Local Governments: The Role of City Councils and a Proposal for Restructuring', *Çağdaş Yerel Yönetimler* 27, no. 1 (2018): 130–1.

in the design phase and has not yet been implemented. Aiming to enhance direct citizen participation in decision-making and strengthen democratic culture, the municipality has launched the 'Bizizmir' (We Are İzmir) digital democracy square. Through the Bizizmir website and mobile application, users can access various municipal services digitally. Additionally, via the 'Söz Sende' (Your Voice Matters) forum, citizens can submit project proposals to the municipality and participate in voting.<sup>103</sup>

### **Adaptedness of participatory budgeting in Türkiye and unitary states, chances and uneasinesses**

Unitary states refer to systems where a single political party governs or where executive functions are divided between two offices in a dual executive structure.<sup>104</sup> In these forms of government, as the rigid Weberian classical administration gives way to a human-centred governance approach, ideas of participation and city councils have emerged. From a public administration perspective, these councils play crucial roles in enhancing the efficiency and legitimacy of public administration processes through participation, democracy, and governance. Participatory democracy serves as an understanding that significantly impacts governance systems by empowering citizens, promoting inclusiveness, collaboration, and policy efficiency, and contributing to a more responsive, legitimate, and effective form of governance that reflects the needs and desires of the people it serves. It fosters transparency and accountability, leading to effective public administration outcomes. For administrators, knowing the preferences of citizens brings about more efficient delivery of goods and services, better meeting public needs, and achieving optimal outcomes that maximize public welfare.

Participatory budgeting, as previously mentioned, consists of funds allocated by the government for specific projects, differing from the shares of the national budget received by legitimately elected assemblies or administrators. Unlike the regular budget process, city councils often reconcile preferences through a two-stage process of idea consolidation. This process carries both beneficial and concerning outcomes for a unitary state. Since citizens generally possess valuable insights and practical knowledge that can inform policy design and implementation, more innovative solutions may emerge. Additionally, it can strengthen the democratic legitimacy of public administration processes and help build trust between the government and the public. Moreover, city councils, through these budgets, provide more complex yet tangible improvements in public service delivery compared to past governance models that ignored citizen demands. Financially, the neutral collection of individual and collective demand variables from citizens through primary methods is beneficial for optimizing public revenues and determining expenditure levels that maximize social benefits.

Another advantage of participatory budgeting, as introduced by Baiocchi and Ganuza,<sup>105</sup> drawing from Habermas, involves technical experts assigned by municipalities to assist citizens with complex public processes. Considering public revenues, simplifying

<sup>103</sup>Yücel Demirkılıç and Mehmet Hanefi Topal, 'E-Participatory Budgeting as an Innovative Approach', *Journal of Public Finance Studies* 72, no. 1 (2024), 144.

<sup>104</sup>Bereket Habte Selassie, *The Executive in African Government* (London, UK: Heinemann, 1974), 22.

<sup>105</sup>Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Ernesto Ganuza, 'Participatory Budgeting as if Emancipation Mattered', *Politics & Society* 42, no. 1 (2014), 37.

the tax compliance, effort, and capacity of citizens by explaining public revenues like property taxes, wastewater fees, and garbage and sanitation taxes in line with the principle of fiscal equivalence can reduce citizens' motivations for informality and increase their tax compliance, effort, and demand by eliminating asymmetric information problems with simplified information. Furthermore, the presence of participatory budgeting prepared and implemented by city councils can positively contribute to confidence-building, calming markets, and assisting in fiscal consolidation. For citizens who believe decisions are made in line with the interests of local administrators and bureaucrats, the presence of public and civic organizations as an implementation and oversight mechanism, and the theoretical obligation of administrators to adhere to locally made decisions can build trust. The transmission of preferences and demands from the bottom up is significantly positive in reconciling political preferences in the fiscal structure, as Habermas<sup>106</sup> suggests, by establishing and strengthening the link between government and collective motivation. Additionally, the public's access to local fiscal information and the fiscal planning and management of goods and services provided or planned to be provided facilitates transparency. This situation strengthens the principle of accountability included in the Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018 in Türkiye.

In Türkiye, participatory budgeting has still been implemented in various municipalities, using a range of tools where citizens develop proposals based on priorities and make decisions through voting, with final approval by local authorities. Despite this, there is a lack of widespread and consistent application of participatory budgeting practices. While organizational structures like city councils provide opportunities for citizen participation, limitations exist in their formation and engagement in budgetary processes. Research indicates that most participation in city councils comes from civil society organizations, local leaders, and political parties, rather than direct citizen involvement. Moreover, participation in strategic planning and budgeting processes remains limited, with only a portion of city councils involved in these stages. Factors such as insufficient awareness, political culture, local bureaucracy, and regulations contribute to this limited participation. While opportunities for public involvement in the budget cycle exist, the actual application in Türkiye mainly allows for citizen input during the proposal stage, with final decisions made by authorities. Participation in monitoring the budget's implementation is possible through reports, which are legally required to be published, but these are not specifically tied to participatory budgeting. Thus, while city councils have facilitated a transformation in citizen participation, the effectiveness of these processes is constrained by indirect participation through civil society, advisory decisions, and a lack of established procedures for public involvement in the implementation phase.<sup>107</sup>

In Türkiye, key takeaways from participatory practices highlight the importance of informing citizens about the decision-making process and how to participate, as this can reduce biases and concerns regarding adaptedness and uneasiness of participatory budgeting. While informing citizens is a critical first step, it alone is insufficient. Another

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<sup>106</sup>Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008), 138.

<sup>107</sup>Esra Doğan, 'Participatory Budgeting as a Social Experience: A Theoretical Query for Turkey Application,' *Journal of Economy Culture and Society* 61, no. 1 (2020): 262–9; Müge Yetkin Ataer, 'Participatory Budgeting: A Critical Approach,' *Istanbul Journal of Economics* 72, no. 1 (2022): 379–2; Atahan Taşkın, 'The Use of Information Communication Technologies in Participatory Budgeting Approach: The "Neighborhood Council" Model,' *Pamukkale University Journal of Social Sciences Institute* 64, no. 5 (2024): 54–7.

factor affecting success is the capacity of citizens to influence local decisions, which remains limited in many participatory practices. Even when processes are participatory in structure, few decisions genuinely reflect citizen input. Additionally, the level of ownership by the actors involved and the continuity of initiatives are crucial. Many participatory practices in local governance are short-term, often limited by project durations, which hinders the establishment of a lasting participatory culture. Practices that lack continuity can diminish citizens' faith in the process, leading to disengagement over time. Moreover, the success of participatory initiatives depends on their alignment with local conditions. Programs imported from other countries may fail if they don't address local needs. Therefore, participatory mechanisms must be tailored to local circumstances to ensure their effectiveness. The involvement of city councils, particularly after the Earth Summit and the initiation of Türkiye's YG21 process, is crucial. City councils should play a more active role in promoting citizen participation, as their primary goal is to integrate citizens into local decision-making and strengthen participatory awareness. Thus, empowering city councils and enhancing their participatory structures is vital for a more effective participatory process.<sup>108</sup>

Türkiye is a country where the content of the unitary state structure has been disputed from the pre-Republican Ottoman period to the present day, with the benefits of the modern republic being internalized. Politically, it is alleged that the governance and/or decentralization topics compromise Türkiye's unitary state structure. In this sense, this study is built on the notion that the context of participatory budgeting and fiscal governance needs to be scrutinized without being detached from it. However, according to Habermas,<sup>109</sup> regulatory idealizations that help determine the rational acceptability of controversial statements cannot themselves be considered infallible. In this context, discussing such budgeting purely as a good practice is evidently insufficient from a fiscal perspective. At this point, Day's<sup>110</sup> characterization of participation as the Achilles' tendon of management can be extended to say that participatory budgeting is the fiscal Achilles' tendon of governance or strengthened governance for unitary state structures. From a fiscal dynamics perspective, participatory budgeting has significant potential outcomes that can reach various dimensions. The inclusiveness of citizen formations concerning gender equality, adherence to principles of positive discrimination, or the extent to which disadvantaged groups are included is noteworthy but also debatable. Moreover, the idea of equalizing the rich and poor at the level of ideas is highly romantic in such a crucially centralist and inegalitarian country as Türkiye, and expecting cultural norms to operate within such an organization and the magical disappearance of class distinctions' power simulations in one setting is equally romantic. Planning by a region's residents, ignoring disadvantaged individuals like migrants, may lead to problematic outcomes in the medium and long term in Türkiye, even if not immediately.

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<sup>108</sup>İtibar Aydemir Uslu and Hakkı Hakan Yılmaz, 'Participation in Local Governments: The Role of City Councils and a Proposal for Restructuring', *Çağdaş Yerel Yönetimler* 27, no. 1 (2018): 131–2; Giovanni Allegretti and Mehmet Koçdemir, 'Participatory Budgeting Practices: Comparison of Turkey and Portugal Experiences', *Journal of Turkish Court of Accounts* 32, no. 123 (2021): 121–2; and Semra Altıngöz Zarplı, 'As a New Approach in Public Budgeting: Participatory Budgeting a Research for Municipalities in Turkey', *Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University Journal of Social and Economic Research* 24, no. 43 (2022): 1081–6.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>110</sup>Diane Day, 'Citizen Participation in the Planning Process: An Essentially Contested Concept?' *Journal of Planning Literature* 11, no. 3 (1997), 422.

With the COVID-19 pandemic that emerged in 2019, city councils that emphasized digitalization and prepared budgets through remote connections have yet to provide a clear indication of how broad-based their contributions can be. There is already a theoretical debate about the quality of collective deliberations between participatory budgeting and digitalization. The inclusion of a minority making decisions for a majority through technology raises questions about the process and the role of public administrations involved. Furthermore, governance is not just about opening communication channels, using them more coordinately, or the ethnic origins, identities, or income levels of participants. It also involves the interactions and integrations of institutions and citizen organizations on an administrative level. Discussions about the adequacy of coordination between public institutions in Türkiye, including municipal units, special administrations, regional and local planning development agencies, and citizen organizations in the relevant region, raise questions about how preferable such a public policy would be.

Participatory budgeting, inspired by utopian thinkers over the past two decades, is linked to the strengthened participatory governance concept, an ideal-typical institutional design proposal for deliberative decision-making and pragmatic problem-solving among participants on a common benefit.<sup>111</sup> Considering that this management approach accepts reforms that delegate decision-making to local units as a cornerstone, it is efficient and rapid in decision-making, while potentially inexecutable in terms of the autonomy granted. Because most citizens and politicians are strongly committed to the concept of centralism in Türkiye. Additionally, the true inclusiveness of the targeted citizens and citizen organizations and their knowledge concerning investment returns or cost-benefit analysis are also debatable. How participatory budgeting establishes social justice criteria and reflects them in action planning is a crucial question for public budgets.<sup>112</sup> Decisions regarding which public expenditures to fund are made during the budget proposal preparation. Given that participants will prioritize their benefit maximization in a public investment they decide on, the positive externality of the selected project may not be evenly distributed across society, nor may it be expected to significantly enhance the benefit level of the entire community. This is one of the fundamental issues in the public finance literature concerning the reconciliation of political preferences in the budgeting process.<sup>113</sup>

Considering the fiscal problems listed by the TKKB,<sup>114</sup> which are observed in councils worldwide, it is understood that the issues in participatory budgeting extend beyond insufficient funding for Türkiye. A council's lack of budget for a desired project means that citizens cannot fully access or benefit from public services. The welfare loss from the suboptimal maximization of social benefits and the intense fiscal policies implemented to compensate for this should be evaluated as additional costs. If a project is carried out instead of a costly one, public harm may occur alongside the previously mentioned issues.

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<sup>111</sup>Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Ernesto Ganuza, 'Participatory Budgeting as if Emancipation mattered', *Politics & Society* 42, no. 1 (2014), 33.

<sup>112</sup>Pierre Lascoumes and Patrick Le Galès, 'Public Policy Through its Instruments—From the Nature of Instruments to the Sociology of Public Policy Instrumentation', *Governance* 20, no. 1 (2007), 5.

<sup>113</sup>Joseph Stiglitz, *Economics of Public Sector* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000); Harvey S. Rosen and Ted Gayer, *Public Finance*, 8th edition (Singapore: McGraw-Hill, 2008); and John Cullis and Philip Jones, *Public Finance & Public Choice: Analytical Perspectives* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>114</sup>TKKB [Türkiye City Councils Union], *Kent Konseyleri, Sorunlar ve Beklentiler* (Çanakkale: Türkiye City Councils Union Publishing, 2016).

When administrators' choices drive the decisions, it leads to the violation of the right to budget expenditure, obtained by citizens in the 1688 Bill of Rights. Moreover, in an environment where participants and administrators cannot be distinguished, numerous micro and macro socio-economic problems may arise, from the inefficiency of the cumbersome Leviathan state to the failure to reconcile preferences correctly, from the failure to achieve efficiency in resource allocation to the unresolved scarcity issue. Similarly, having the same person request and make the expenditure contradicts the fundamental principle of accountability outlined in Turkish Law No. 5018 and results in dysfunctional oversight mechanisms.

On the other hand, the fact that participatory budgeting is not the primary budget of a local government forces it to become an actor in the budget process of the local government, or, in systems with strong local autonomy, becomes a pressure element to align the local government's budget process with it. As Baiocchi and Ganuza<sup>115</sup> argue, establishing a new budget planning office to centralize governance accounts and participatory budgeting, creating a framework over the municipal budget, subject to the municipal council's approval, while ensuring numerous participants' pressure and monitoring typically lead to the budget's approval without changes, signifies a testament to the fiscal systems of unitary states. The sensitivity regarding the existence of supra-state structures in unitary states remains intact.<sup>116</sup>

## Conclusions and policy recommendations

This study examines the extent to which a participatory budgeting model, as a component of local fiscal governance, can be implemented in highly centralized countries like Türkiye. The concept of participation in this country was institutionalized when city councils were introduced into the legal framework through a legislative amendment in 2006. Although Türkiye has lagged behind global examples over time, a significant number of city councils have been established. These councils have an impact through contributions from civil society organizations, either actively or passively, as they engage in municipal decision-making processes. This study portrays the phenomenon of city councils and participation in Türkiye as an Achilles' heel of local fiscal governance. Three key findings emerge regarding city councils and participation. The first is although the legal framework has facilitated public participation at the local level to evolve into a broader societal practice in public financial management, significant issues persist in terms of actual public engagement. Public participation at the local level is hindered by two challenges: the failure to ensure participation and the inefficacy of participation when it does occur. The lack of public interest in organized structures and their unwillingness to engage constitute the first issue, while the second arises from the public's tendency to focus solely on matters directly affecting them when participation does take place. Furthermore, existing administrative and legal regulations prevent the public from directly engaging in decision-making processes, limiting participation to the stage of idea generation. This situation not only exacerbates public hesitations towards

<sup>115</sup>Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Ernesto Ganuza, 'Participatory Budgeting as if Emancipation Mattered', *Politics & Society* 42, no. 1 (2014): 36–7.

<sup>116</sup>Harold Wollman and Michael Goldsmith, *Urban Politics and Policy* (London, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1992), 45.

participation but also demonstrates that the current regulations are not structured to facilitate effective participation.

The second key finding is in Türkiye, participatory budgeting and participation in local governance are perceived as distinct concepts. The consolidated municipal budgets, which combine the budgets of all municipal units and departments into a single fiscal plan, are approved and enacted by mayors, elected municipal council members, and other municipal officials during the budget formulation process. City councils and their constituent members do not hold any voting rights in these decisions. Instead of participatory budgeting, participation is emphasized through the integration of city council opinions and recommendations in the implementation and execution phases of projects planned for the relevant fiscal year. In recent years, city councils established within municipalities such as Antalya Muratpaşa, İzmir Metropolitan, İstanbul Metropolitan, Bursa Metropolitan, Bursa Nilüfer, and Çanakkale have engaged more actively in democratic processes,<sup>117</sup> such as proposing, formulating, and developing projects; budgeting; expressing opinions on the allocation of municipal funds for city councils and their projects; and even advocating for increased budget allocations.

The third key finding is that one of the other primary challenges facing participatory budgeting in Turkey is the low level of public awareness regarding city councils and their functions. It pretends like Türkiye's centralized structure does not help either and that participation continues to be an Achilles' heel in local fiscal governance. This indicates that the fundamental requirements, which are social awareness and participation for effective participatory budgeting, are not being met, as the overall level of social participation has not yet reached a conventional structure. In this paper, we also provide policy recommendations related to enhancing citizen participation in participatory budgeting and city council practices. City councils serve as fundamental institutions for strengthening civic engagement and transforming participatory budgeting into a more substantive social practice. Enhancing the inclusivity of organized structures enables city councils to more accurately represent and incorporate the collective decisions of the public. For participatory budgeting to function effectively, it is essential that legal and administrative frameworks actively support the process. Achieving this necessitates a paradigmatic shift from a representative model of democracy towards a more participatory approach. The lack of political, economic, and social debate between local and central governments could accelerate this shift. Rather than a rigid centralized state, an inclusive centralism that views participation and democracy at the local level as inherent rather than representative (electoral) could better protect its Achilles' heel.

Moreover, we think forums and consultative meetings among ordinary citizens can play an important role. This can empower citizens to take a more active role in budgetary decision-making, thereby transcending the limitations of traditional representative democracy. However, the process may evolve into political participation rather than individual participation in local administrations already chosen through representative democracy practices due to scope and time restrictions. Individual participation over political participation can help avoid transforming project negotiations into political debates. Additionally, prioritizing the involvement of disadvantaged and less-represented social groups can be suggested to

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<sup>117</sup>See note 115 above.

achieve concrete results. These recommendations highlight the importance of ensuring that decisions made are transparent, that they are project-oriented, and that programs should promote social justice and economic welfare. We believe that strengthening community involvement, fostering local identity awareness, and promoting social justice are indispensable to the participatory budgeting framework. Presenting texts from the city council as formal resolutions to the municipal assembly, defining budgetary objectives on an activity/project basis by the municipality, organizing periodic 'citizen information meetings' by neighbourhood representatives, and having policy proposals drafted by citizens and approved by the city council general assembly and subsequently ratified by the municipal council for implementation are all about the democratic nature and efficiency of public participation. One last thing would be that while technological implications, such as electronic participation, can facilitate participation, care must be taken to avoid excluding those without internet access or from marginalized groups, as this could exacerbate inequalities.

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